

*“What Kine Hawaiian Are You?”  
A Mo‘olelo about Nationhood, Race,  
History, and the Contemporary  
Sovereignty Movement in Hawai‘i*

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*On 23 February 2000, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Rice versus Cayetano that the ancestry qualification for voters of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs was unconstitutional because it violated the Fifteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. Although a politically narrow ruling, the court dispensed with one of the agency’s most significant political functions, namely, acting as a form of self-government for over two hundred thousand Hawaiians in the islands, while temporarily at least sustaining that agency’s continued function of dispensing funds and services to Native Hawaiians. The significance of the ruling depends on one’s point of view. There is no unqualified Hawaiian perspective on this issue, partly because of the history of Hawaiian sovereignty in Hawai‘i and partly because of the perplexities among Hawaiian Natives and residents about race, nationality, and culture.*

In the past thirty years cultural theory has helped to create a kind of academic uncertainty about the functions and nature of culture. From Geertz and his thick descriptions to articulation theories in the past decade, the disciplines of culture have steadily moved from a kind of fixed position in which the ethnologist knows and observes the ethnographic subject, to a much more fluid and dynamic study in which every participant, ethnologist, Native subject, and even the study itself evolves and changes as a result of their interaction with each other.

There is an existing metaphor for this process in the emergence of Hawaiian studies at the University of Hawai‘i. Those of us who teach and

research the Native point of view are also participants on one level or another in the political sovereignty movement, in the movement to revitalize our Native culture and language, or both. Thus, any history that we tell, whether it comes from the oral traditions that are centuries old, from the published accounts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, or even from the correspondence and editorials of contemporary scholar-activists, is not merely informational, but carries an activist content. The stories are meant to persuade and motivate, but they are also meant to explain our lives. These stories are all *mo'olelo*, whether they tell of mythic beings, of "real" individuals whose power and influence affected the society in which they lived, of personal occurrences and family stories, and whether remembered in the mind or committed to writing. In *mo'olelo*, the teller has the obligation as well as the right to be critical, to make pointed judgments of the subjects, to mock and anoint them, and even to claim a special knowledge of the subject that makes a particular *mo'olelo* worth heeding.

Such assertive scholarship can be traced from the writings of mid-nineteenth-century historians like David Malo and Samuel Kamakau to contemporary scholars like Lilikal Kame'eleihiwa and Haunani-Kay Trask at the Center for Hawaiian Studies. Over more than a century, all of these writers have described the Hawaiian nation, the *l hui*, struggling to survive in the wake of disease and large-scale social change that the arrival of *haole* (Europeans and Americans) wrought in the islands. Despite significant differences in the political outlooks of the mission-taught Kamakau and the mission critic Kame'eleihiwa, for instance, they both glorify important aspects of the ancient culture and comment unfavorably on the changes brought by *haole* law. Kamakau, a member of the House of Representatives in the Kingdom of Hawai'i, made these salient remarks in 1867: "The truth was, they were laws to change the old laws of the natives of the land and cause them to lick ti leaves like the dogs and gnaw bones thrown at the foot of strangers, while the strangers became their lords, and the hands and voices of strangers were raised over those of the native race. The commoners knew this and one and all expressed their disapproval" (Kamakau 1992, 399).

Where contemporary Native scholars have called for a renewal of Hawaiian commitment to traditional values such as love and responsibility for the ' *ina* (land), nonnative writers and politicians have responded with skepticism. Anthropologist Jocelyn Linnekin labeled one such cultural imperative *Aloha ' ina* (cherishing land), an invented tradition of

land stewardship (1983, 251–253). More recently, *Honolulu* magazine writer Bob Rees specifically criticized several Hawaiian Studies professors for teaching what he called “therapeutic history,” that is, history that is more concerned with polemical battles than with fact (1996).

Neither of these claims went unchallenged. Both Linnekin and Rees were the subject of scornful rebuttals, which, among other things, challenged the qualifications of these *haole* writers to speak about either Hawaiian culture or Hawaiian history (Trask 1999, 128). Issues of race and culture have been a defining part of the controversy that swirls about Hawaiian academia, where even Governor Benjamin Cayetano has called on the university to counter the “revisionist history” being taught at the University of Hawai‘i saying, “Knowing Haunani (Trask) and some of the people up there, I think they have been teaching history which fits their particular view of things” (Asato 2000, 1).

If the governor were honest he would acknowledge that his remarks could hardly be taken for those of someone who is merely interested in education and scholarship. There are huge political stakes in Hawai‘i that hinge on Hawaiian sovereignty, land claims, and federal and state laws, that make the study of such things tremendously important to the political powers in these islands. In the face of ominous political winds, we Hawaiians find ourselves having to navigate enigmatic and paradoxical cognitive terrains of nationalism and race, which tend to diffuse and disable our political movement for sovereignty while confounding our attempts to define and assert ourselves.

Nevertheless, the broad-based interest in the history, culture, language, and environment of Hawai‘i, especially among a growing body of Native scholars, suggests a concern for more than political positioning. In this paper, I hope to demonstrate that identity (who we think we are) is the foundation on which Native cultural studies is based. No other question is as important to us, and no other question is so seriously contested by others.

It is generally agreed that Hawaiians<sup>1</sup> are an ethnic group, today comprising the descendants of the people who settled the Hawaiian Islands before the first Europeans arrived. Hawaiians are thus defined by ancestry, which is an important place of origin in any discussion of Hawaiian identity. For if being a descendant of a Native makes one Native, what if anything does blood quantum have to do with who we are? Does the *dilution* of Hawaiian ancestry in any significant way change the ethnicity of the individual?

Usually, the argument that someone of a smaller blood quantum is not entirely Hawaiian is offered up by people who are not themselves Hawaiian. Not once in my life has any Hawaiian ever said or even hinted to me that my being less than full-blooded made me any less Hawaiian. On the other hand, the fact that I rarely use Pidgin English is much more of an identity issue to those Hawaiians who speak Pidgin regularly. And I can still remember times when, after refusing certain kinds of foods, such as *ake* (liver) or *'ulu* (breadfruit), being asked, "You no eat *'ulu*? What kine Hawaiian are you?"

At least for Natives today, our attachments to culture are indications of our identity as significant as ancestry, although ancestry—that is, some kind of Hawaiian blood, however minute—is also a necessary precondition to being Hawaiian.<sup>2</sup> Questions of blood quantum (how much Hawaiian) may be raised between Hawaiians, but usually from curiosity and, in polite conversation, not as an issue with political implications.

However, because of the nature of the history of Native entitlements in Hawai'i, from the Hawaiian Homes Act of 1921 to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, blood quantum is a legal issue, and so for Americans, an issue that may be discussed without regard for privacy or politeness.<sup>3</sup> Occasionally, *haole* have asked about my blood quantum wondering why I identify as a Hawaiian and not as Portuguese, Chinese, or German. I usually answer by saying that both my parents had Hawaiian blood, but the simple truth is that I was identified as a Hawaiian by every institution that had anything to do with my rearing: family, church, school (especially teachers), and other children in the all-Hawaiian community in which I grew up. Such questions used to strike me as expressions of curiosity, though these days there is a fairly strong institutional and political interest in Hawaiian blood quantum, which makes the question less innocent.

Americans have become more assertive that blood quantum matters with regard to Native Americans because long-standing political arrangements between Native nations and the United States have led to a system of financial entitlements, political autonomy, and land control for a host of Native tribes in America. Such arrangements rub some Americans the wrong way, because they believe that there is a part of the Native American community with the smallest blood quantum of, say, Cherokee or Lakota—hardly Natives at all, in their opinion—who nevertheless have distinct rights and privileges. In other words, being Native in America is an opportunity, as though those who claim such ancestry would probably not bother if political and financial advantages were not involved.<sup>4</sup>

Caucasians in the United States may find it politically advantageous to raise the ideological standard of “equal treatment” under the law when they find themselves the objects of discrimination, however small. I remember listening to several white men in Anchorage telling me how unfair it is that Native Alaskans have much greater access to salmon fishing, hunting, and gathering under subsistence rights than they do, even while “everyone knows” that they are engaging in commerce as well as subsistence. The entitlement was little more than an inconvenience for these men, but seemed to have a greater impact just because it was understood as discrimination against them.

In Hawai'i the economics are, perhaps, more critical for *haole* who contend that Native entitlements like the Hawaiian Homes Act, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and even the private trust of the Kamehameha Schools unconstitutionally or unfairly entitles a portion of the state's citizenry on the basis of race. In a place where over half of the land is held or controlled by the federal and state governments and fee-simple ownership is rare and expensive, it is hardly surprising that Americans, unaccustomed to having their opportunities limited, would question the land entitlements of Native Hawaiians.

But even if being Native in Hawai'i today is an opportunity of sorts, race, for Americans, has been the principal justification for their seizure of wealth, power, and land in Hawai'i and for the maintenance of incredible privileges as long as they have been in the islands. J K haulani Kauanui gave a provocative analysis of the “blood quantum debates” in Congress prior to the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act in 1921. Her article “‘For Get’ Hawaiian Entitlements,” discusses how legislation came to distinguish Hawaiians of 50 percent blood quantum as a “beneficiary class” after first sidestepping the issue that Hawaiians actually had rights to the lands from which the benefits would come. She wrote, “In the common sense of U.S. hegemony ‘returning Hawaiians to the land’ thus effaced the alternative of returning the land to Hawaiians” (1999, 129). At the same time as it established the blood quantum requirement that reduced the number of potential beneficiaries, it also defined those with more Hawaiian blood as those less assimilated, less American, *and therefore* more incompetent. Such efficient twining of political ideology and effect!

Kauanui's analysis is compelling, and follows in the theoretical footprints of writers like Barbara Fields, who argued that race is an ideological construct and therefore a historical product (1990, 101). To be sure,

race consciousness has been a product of a particular history in America, or as Fields put it, "American racial ideology is as original an invention of the Founders as is the United States itself" (1982, 150). American race ideologies have been malleable and well suited to changing political and economic circumstances, as most ideologies are. Nevertheless, even if race were no more than an assigned social criterion, we would do well to examine the point of view of Native Peoples who have consistently argued that ancestry and blood *matter* in the complex adoptions of culture and identity.

Being Hawaiian was important to Natives regardless of the fact that until the past twenty years there were scarcely any political or economic advantages tied to identifying oneself as Native. The Hawaiian Homes Act, passed by Congress in 1921, did promise house and farm lots to individuals of 50 percent blood quantum or more, but within thirty years the Act and the commission that administered it had become a grim joke among Hawaiians, who acknowledged that the waiting list for a homestead was as long as decades, and that the awardees were either lottery-fortunate or politically connected (Faludi 1990).

The cruel history of this program notwithstanding, a small, vocal, and highly publicized group of individuals, most of them *haole*, has criticized all the so-called entitlement programs, even the Hawaiian Homes Act, as "affirmative action programs" that unfairly dole out revenues, resources, and political rights to "minorities." Couched in the language of contemporary Republicanism they present affirmative action as a racist institution, no more appropriate to America than the Jim Crow laws of the nineteenth century.

Few Hawaiians have been beguiled by this argument, mostly because attacks on our culture and our nation by a small minority of *haole* have such a long history. Yet the attacks themselves miss some important points about the trusts. One is that Hawaiians think they are deserved, whether they, individually, are beneficiaries or not. More important, despite a century of American education, and the prevalence of American cultural values in our society, many of us *k naka* continue to see ourselves as a *l hui*, a distinct nationality that we have every right to maintain.

The oldest and, I believe, still largest Native initiative for sovereignty is Ka L hui Hawai'i, an organization whose constitution acknowledges the problems of blood quantum while insisting that a trace of Hawaiian ancestry is necessary for full citizenship in the nation-within-a-nation government. Half of Ka L hui's national legislature must be composed of representatives of at least 50 percent blood quantum, acknowledging that

federal entitlements like the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act have failed the majority of Hawaiians who qualified (Ka L hui 1987, 15). It is telling that from its inception in 1987, Ka L hui sought to protect those who had been promised land by the United States and who never received it, even though this policy risked political divisions within the organization itself. The fact that Ka L hui has shown remarkable endurance may indicate that blood quantum discrimination is acceptable to Hawaiians so long as the government means well by it. But it is difficult to convince Americans and their Supreme Court that not every culture has had such a violent and ugly experience with race that it is necessary to pretend that it does not exist in law.

Our conceptions of race and nationality are drawn by our own past, and obscured by our historic relationships with Americans. For it was Americans who began the religious conversions, wrote the first constitutions, built and enlarged the plantation systems, and, when they no longer needed it, replaced the Native government with their own. Political, economic, and social change have been the legacies of our two-hundred-year history with the United States, though as Hawaiians we have changed differently—as differently as our genetic inheritances have changed with each foreign addition to our families. Some of us have been more “successful” at assimilating American culture and values, some more successful at living with the differences. Some have refused to assimilate, and others have suffered great harm by their own confusion over assimilation.

Perhaps, as Fields asserted, race itself has nothing to do with how we have accommodated American culture and a Hawaiian-Portuguese is no more likely to assimilate in a particular way than a Hawaiian-Chinese. Yet, race definitely matters to us. It is important to us that we are, in the first place, Hawaiian. Moreover, our attitudes toward *haole* have not really changed all that much over time. We were ambivalent about them in the nineteenth century and we remain so today. We allowed them to live here, prosper, and even rule us, but we always recognized that they were not Hawaiians.

### “I CALL YOU THE ANGEL OF DEATH”

On 26 July 1887, Hawaiian voters in Honolulu held a meeting to nominate candidates for a new and very different sort of legislature. Such rallies had become a regular and cyclical part of political life for *K naka Maoli* since the 1840s, when constitutional law created the right of the people to select members of the House of Representatives. But this meet-

ing was different. For the first time, *k naka* faced the very certain prospect of having the Legislative Assembly dominated by *haole* nobles and representatives who were hostile to their king and, they believed, hostile to the kingdom's independence.

This election departed from the established rhythms and rules of elections that had been held every even year in the month of February since 1856. A constitution forced on the king earlier in July had expelled the 1886 legislature, rendered the king nearly impotent, and drastically redefined the electorate and the meaning of citizenship. The genesis of this constitution was as disturbing as its provisions. It had been invented in secrecy by a covert organization of *haole* men who, the *k naka* believed, had not only confiscated the power of the government for themselves, but had soiled the meaning of nationhood for Native Hawaiians. It became known as the Bayonet Constitution.

It was a perplexing time. The new laws hopelessly entangled issues of race, which had not existed before the arrival of *haole*, and issues of class, which had been greatly transformed by *haole* economic success. The constitution converted the House of Nobles from a council of the king's appointees and the remnants of the great *ali'i* lineages to a special legislative branch of, by, and for the wealthy. The House of Representatives no longer represented the native-born and naturalized citizen, but was expanded to include any Caucasian resident, even as the law limited voting only to *k naka* who were willing to swear allegiance to the constitution, while terminating the voting rights of over four hundred Asian citizens. The *m 'i* (king), once the supreme political authority and last fortress of political power for the *k naka*, was reduced to a mere figurehead, signifying a further loss of Native prestige.

The new constitution was executed by force. Supported by the Honolulu Rifles, a paramilitary force of over four hundred men, a small delegation of the most malevolent opponents of King Kalikouka threatened and browbeat him for several hours before he finally signed the law. The king was alone, having dismissed his prime minister and his cabinet only a few days before. He took that action after months of heated criticism by a small but well-connected group of *haole* who had formed themselves into the secret organization that called itself the Hawaiian League. Unhappy with the king's administration and its policies, unhappy with monarchy, unhappy even that Hawaiians simply showed no apparent desire to become Americans, the league was determined minimally to replace Kalikouka's ministry and ultimately to secure annexation by the United States.



*The king was alone.* That fact said volumes about the political divisions in Hawaiian society that had existed from the moment he had ascended to the kingship thirteen years before. Then a large group of Native Hawaiians had opposed his selection, by the Legislative Assembly, over Emma Naea Rooke, a descendant of the Kamehameha line and widow of former M 'ī Alexander Liholiho, Kamehameha IV. Over the next few years, *k naka* had divided politically over their positions with respect to the king, his policies, his advisers, and his ideas. But their opposition to him was complicated by the fact that many *haole*, especially Americans, did not distinguish between their dislike of Kal kaua and their contempt for monarchs in general, Native monarchs in particular, and Native voters altogether.

Highly respected legislators such as Joseph N wahī and George Pilip , supporters of Queen Emma, had led such vigorous opposition to the king that leaders of a new Independent party, led by Hawai'i-born *haole* had invited several of them to run for the Assembly on their ballot, insisting that the only way for the Native opposition to hope to match the king's influence over the legislature was to ally itself with *haole* voters and their resources.

Having *k naka* join the party was also the only way for the Independents to establish any real political success, as *k naka* voters loyal to the king outnumbered them many times over. Had Kal kaua enjoyed the universal Native support that all of his predecessors had known, the Independent party could hardly have existed at all. But he had never had this support, and steadily mounting attacks in the newspapers on his policies and his alleged corruptions had compromised his leadership. Some Hawaiians, like N wahī, believed that such a king, unchecked by a legitimate party of opposition, would squander the nation's wealth and guarantee the loss of its sovereignty. But far more *k naka* suspected the Independent *haole* of wanting to establish a republic, or worse, give the kingdom away to America.

All of these *k naka* were patriots. But their political disagreements over the king began to overshadow their sense of kinship with the *l hui*. In the aftermath of the Bayonet Constitution, it was difficult for *k naka* politicians and their supporters to know how to meet the challenges it posed. Several individuals and organizations quickly petitioned the king to reverse the situation and reinstate the old constitution. He refused. So the meeting in Honolulu was hostile and uneasy. Samuel Kane, a candidate for representative who opposed the new law, was nevertheless uncertain

about how to overturn it. "We have not yet signed it," he said, referring to the required oath of allegiance. "If we do not take the oath, of course, we cannot vote. But in this perilous time we are under obligation to take oath under it. No matter if we agree with it or not, we shall have a majority on our side, and then we will be able to change it."

But A P Kalaukoa, a perennial candidate for more than a decade and unelected since 1876, made the most forceful arguments for the new constitution in the face of an overwhelmingly unfriendly audience. After recounting the merits of the new law, he asked what he hoped was a rhetorical question, "Now tell me, have any of you been endangered by this new constitution?" "*Nui ka Pilikia*" (We are greatly oppressed), the crowd roared back. The next speaker, Honolulu attorney Joseph Poepoe, recalled Kalaukoa's remarks and said, "I call you the angel of death." Then, he spoke about the nation and its regard for its king, reminding the audience of the importance of the king to the Native identity and how that distinguished them from *haole*. "The Americans have no respect for royalty, for they have no king. Therefore, they want to exercise the same power here as they do in their own country. They are doing it little by little, and it will not be long before Hawai'i becomes an entire republic. We who cherish our King ought not to allow this to be done" (PCA, 26 July 1887, "Mass Meeting in Honolulu").

Confusion and unease over what should be done to maintain a tenuous foothold in their kingdom's political future dominated these rallies. They disagreed over strategies, they proposed alliances, but mostly they argued heatedly over whether they should take the oath, thus allowing them to vote and run for office. In the end, thousands of *k naka* loyalists refused to vote in September, guaranteeing that the Independent party, now calling itself the Reform party, would control the government for the foreseeable future. Former Independents, particularly Nawahi, enlisted new political parties opposing the Bayonet Constitution, *haole* control, and annexation. By 1892 there were several Native-led parties with platforms ranging from restoring the old constitution to establishing a republic in which the *k naka* voters would recover their political majority.

Their opposition to one another overshadowed the central truth that they all wanted only to preserve the sovereignty of the *I hui*. Thus divided, they presented no serious threat to *haole* control until Kal kaua died and his sister, the respected *Ali'i Nui* Lili'uokalani replaced him in 1892. Less than a year later, the queen attempted to promulgate a new constitution, closely based on the pre-1887 law. Faced with this threat to their inter-

ests, a small group of *haole*, incited by the same individuals who had constructed the Bayonet Constitution, appealed to the US delegation in Hawai'i and the commander of the warship USS *Boston* to help them do away with the monarchy once and for all.

## A MO'OLELO OF LAW AND RACE

This is the *mo'olelo*. In English, *mo'olelo* translates as history, story, tale, folktale, account. Literally, it means a fragment of a story, as though the teller recognizes that he is not saying everything there is to say about the subject. I cannot pretend to say everything there is to say about the Bayonet Constitution; indeed, in this *mo'olelo* I can only reveal a fraction of what I know.<sup>5</sup> But all that I know is only a small part of the truth that I do not know. Was the king as corrupt as the newspapers and his political opponents alleged? Were N wahī and other *k naka* Independents aware of the existence of the Hawaiian League and its agendas before it took over the government? What were Kalaukoa's thoughts as he addressed the rally in July? Was he trying to deceive his people, securing *haole* support for his election by sowing doubt and disunity among the *k naka*? Was he courageously risking his reputation by appealing to the Natives to make the best of the situation and maintain at least a semblance of representation in the Assembly? Perhaps he was just a fool.

There are things that I know, thanks in large part to other people's *mo'olelo*. One is that *k naka* were, in fact, seriously injured by the provisions of the Bayonet Constitution. Despite having a seven-to-one ratio over British and American citizens and residents and more than double the population of all Caucasians including recently arrived Portuguese immigrants, *k naka* could not, *if they had cared to*, translate their numerical superiority in the general population into political control of the Assembly (Earle 1993).

In the democratic society that Hawai'i had been before Bayonet, the government was simply not given the option of discriminating among subjects. Even under the liberal laws of the kingdom, Native voters and monarchs *could have* used their electoral majority and consigned *haole* to an insignificant minority in the legislature and refused to appoint them to positions of authority. They never had.

In 1886 the Independents' vicious attacks on the king prompted one newspaper sympathetic to the Crown to proclaim, "If a single native votes for a candidate on the Opposition ticket he is attacking the indepen-

dence of the country and signing away to strangers the graves and bones of his fathers. There is no middle ground to take" (*PCA*, 22 January 1886). Despite having lost three seats to the loyalists, none of the Independents was *haole*. Even the great N wahī was narrowly defeated, and *haole* legislators were as overrepresented as ever. Of the 28 representatives elected in 1886, 10 were *haole*, almost 36 percent. Combined with the 18 *haole* in the House of Nobles (compared to only 8 *k naka*) Caucasians of British, German, and American origins occupied 51 percent of the Legislative Assembly.

What does it mean that Native voters refused to use their legal advantage to limit *haole* influence and that *haole* were willing to use force to change the law in order to enhance theirs? I think it means that Hawaiians believed that the law meant more than mere political opportunism. I think that in the short time that Hawaiians had lived in a nation governed by laws, they had come to appreciate their authority and significance. Their laws had allowed *k naka*, Chinese, and *haole* subjects to live together despite their considerable differences and suspicions, and that was a powerful and venerable authority indeed. As for the authors and supporters of the Bayonet Constitution, their principal symbol of nationhood was not law. It was race.

The constitutional changes of Bayonet were as much about race as they were about removing the power and prestige of the Native monarch. American residents in Hawai'i linked the inferiority of *K naka Maoli* to their willingness to support monarchy in the first place. Missionary scion William R Castle, remembering Bayonet, wrote, "It was in vain to explain the principles of constitutional government to the aroused and jealous supporters of Kal kaua; it was only adding fuel to the fire to warn them that the inevitable result must be loss of independence, because the industries of this country, largely controlled by foreigners, would never consent to be taxed and exploited by the acts of an irresponsible ruling class."

For *k naka* to vote in 1887, therefore, would first require that they disavow their loyalty to the king, though technically an emasculated monarchy would continue to exist. At the same time, virtually any Caucasian was given the right to vote without the requirement of citizenship, or for that matter, any experience with life in Hawai'i. Thus, Bayonet instructed the Native that a newly arrived Portuguese immigrant had as much legitimacy as a second- or third-generation Native Hawaiian voter. But the more disturbing lesson of this law for Hawaiians was that a constitution could annihilate, in the name of political opportunism, the most fundamental ideals of national loyalty. Bayonet became the latest and most

deadly of the political maneuvers and legal creations designed by *haole* to increase their authority and their prosperity in the islands, while diminishing the dignity of the *l hui*.

Having the choice of whether or not to cooperate with the foreigners' law fragmented the *l hui*, creating an angry and uncertain gathering unable to mount anything close to an effective resistance. Divided as it was, however, the only response that Native leaders could advance that evening was a response not to the men and groups of men who had performed this despicable deed, but to the law itself. Their acquiescence to law was never in doubt, as men like Kane argued that not to pledge allegiance to the constitution would render them politically impotent. No one suggested, at least within earshot of a reporter, that the thousands of men in attendance march to the homes of Thurston, Dole, Smith, Ashford, and other members of the new ministry, haul them from their homes, and send them out of the islands on the first boat.

The law was bigger than all of them, bigger than the king and stronger than all of his supporters and opponents. The law had superseded the nation itself. Nothing that any of them brought to bear in the struggle—their lineages, their enormous talents, their courage, not even their numbers and their loyalty to each other—was a match for the law. Indeed the law enabled their talents, courage, and loyalties to work against them as a people, helping to frame them as political parties while eroding their historic kinship with one another. They were marginalized, thrust to the edges of political discourse, while the constitution, this foreign idea, took hold of the center of the controversies it had created.

This law created controversy and in the same moment institutionalized racism, specifically disenfranchising Asian, mostly Chinese, subjects. In every constitution before Bayonet, race and nationality were separate and distinct issues. Citizenship, whether inherited or conferred by oath, had never before been denied on the basis of race. The *haole* constitution integrated the two in ways designed to give *haole* a distinct political advantage. Here I return to Field's analysis, in which she describes race ideologies born after the laws, which defined the free and unfree in colonial America. She wrote, "Practical needs—the need to clarify the property rights of slave holders and the need to discourage free people from fraternizing with slaves—called forth the law. And once practical needs of this sort are ritualized often enough either as conforming behavior or punishment for non conforming behavior, they acquire an ideological rationale that explains to those who take part in the ritual why it is automatic and natural to do so" (1990, 107–108).

Racism had been neither automatic nor natural for the *k naka* in the kingdom. But that is not to say that they were unconscious or unaware that foreigners were different. In the 1840s thousands of *k naka* had signed petitions to the king and the legislature, begging the government not to allow foreigners to become citizens, be allowed political power, or be granted land.<sup>6</sup> When the kingdom denied the petitions of the people and granted foreigners the right to own land, to take oaths of citizenship, and to participate in government, they granted these rights under the law. Did the law presage the people's eventual accommodation of *haole*, or simply sidestep the argument over their difference?

I think it was the latter. What *k naka* felt about *haole* is hard to establish definitively. One of the recipients of the petitions was Minister of Interior Keoniana, the son of a Native Chiefess of considerable rank and the Englishman John Young. There is no evidence anywhere to suggest that *k naka* held this man in contempt because he was only 50 percent Native. It was more important to them that he was a chief, and a child of the Kamehameha line. In fact, less than thirty years later, thousands of *k naka* would violently demonstrate their preference for Queen Emma, John Young's granddaughter, over David Kal kaua because Emma's grandmother was a Kamehameha.

*K naka* voted *haole* into office, gave and sold them lands, married them and loved their children, relied on them, praised them, criticized their arrogance, and deplored their treachery. Accommodation of *haole* was varied and individualized. The law could enable foreigners to make homes in Hawai'i—and fortunes besides—but it could not and did not make them Native.

### A MO'OLELO OF NATIONHOOD

A proper *mo'olelo* delivers lessons from the past that are intended to guide our present behavior. We are still divided, the *K naka Maoli* of the twenty-first century, over what should be our political future after a hundred years of American occupation. When federal representatives from the Department of the Interior came to Hawai'i late in the year 2000 to gather testimony and proposals from *k naka* on how reconciliation between the United States and the Hawaiian people might be effected, *K naka Maoli* turned up by the hundreds at every one of their appearances and treated the delegation to generations of frustration, calling for every conceivable kind of redress: monetary reparations, more aid for education and health, the return of lands and federal recognition, independence, and restoration

of the kingdom. It became obvious that we were not so much speaking to the American delegation as speaking to ourselves, contending over the central problem that had underwritten our loss of sovereignty in the first place. How do we protect our *l hui*, our kinship with one another? Do we conform our responses to the framework of the American political system, hoping that we might bring new benefits to our children thereby, or do we insist on clinging to every tradition that we can recover, insisting on our separateness, our distinctness, from a society that seemingly regards such distinction as anachronistic and dangerous?

Some of us fear that the second option marginalizes us, and that fear itself is troubling. It is as though we have come to believe that we are the ones living on the edges of American life, the center of which contains the true and legitimate criteria for our existence. Though we send our children to immersion schools, we worry when they score poorly in standardized English examinations. Though we demand self-government, those of us who believe that to be an unrealistic dream often scorn the proponents of complete independence.

Yet when we consider the first option, we realize that American law is no more reliable a friend to the Native Hawaiian at the dawn of this century than it was at the turn of the last. As the US Supreme Court deliberated *Rice versus Cayetano*, Hawaiians feared that the decision could initiate a trend to divest the *K naka Maoli* of other “entitlements”—the Ceded Lands Trust, Hawaiian Home Lands, the Native Hawaiian Education Act—or even challenge the Hawaiians-first admission policy of the Kamehameha Schools. These federal, state, and private programs represent some of the few hedges against massive poverty and homelessness.

Knowing this, understanding what is at stake, we still find it difficult to wholeheartedly support the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, an agency that many of us feel has not always behaved honorably and whose factions and intrigues have encouraged those who oppose Native self-government. It would be a considerable distortion to compare the Office of Hawaiian Affairs with Kal kaua’s administration in 1886, but the lessons are similar. Lacking confidence in our leaders and in our own institutions, we look hesitantly to law to provide us relief and perhaps, to finally legitimize us as a nation.

But if law could not make *haole* into Natives in the nineteenth century, then perhaps it cannot make *K naka Maoli* into Americans. I think both Fields and Kauanui would agree that while law constructs and alters ideologies, it does so primarily by mediating (or confusing) the essential qualities of cultural identity in order to promote a particular political

end. National consciousness, loyalty, and patriotism were never merely the product of laws. They were, like culture itself, the weaving of many strands of understandings and behaviors.

Thus, I doubt that laws alone can ever really protect such identities. Our culture—any culture—is far too vast, too complex, too imprecise a mixture of ancestry, values, languages, and rituals for the precision of laws to comfortably address. The US Supreme Court's very limited opinion shies away from any statement at all on the relationship between Hawaiians and America. Yet the US Congress may, through a bill for Federal Recognition, go where the court has refused to go. Recognition may bring a host of economic and political benefits, but it will almost certainly involve identifying Native Hawaiians and place limits on our "resources" by some sort of legal formula that has yet to be clarified.

I wonder how much more fragmentation we can endure? Hawaiians who support full independence or restoration of the kingdom have been generally polite in their criticism of Hawaiians who pursue federal recognition, but there were explosive moments at the Federal Recognition hearings in August 2000, when proponents of independence protested and heckled Hawaiians who had come to speak in favor of the bill. Poepoe's words of frustration linger.

Few Hawaiians are naive about "Recognition and Reconciliation." We know that this is part of a political deal. But we are wrong if we think the effects of this deal can be confined to the political. We will not simply surrender a portion of our lands in the negotiations with the government, nor will we surrender only the scope of our sovereignty. We are surrendering something far more important, faith and trust in each other and our willingness to continue working out our own kinship among ourselves.

Native people cannot look to American law to define Nativeness. Neither can we depend on political solutions alone to retrieve our *l hui*. There is really very little difference between the debates over federal recognition today and cooperation with the Bayonet Constitution more than a century ago. We have all been arguing over whether it is preferable to secure political gains in small steps, or risk losing everything over a principle. In the end, we argue over how best to protect and honor our integrity as a people, and therein lies the only real fragmentation that plagues us. We know that we are a distinct people that was once protected by its own national government. We know that once that government was removed there was nothing to prevent the Americans from defining us however they wished, and nothing to keep us Hawaiian except our own determination.



Perhaps the most surprising development is how Hawaiian we still are. 'Ae, even in the face of a most determined effort to assimilate and quiet us, we persist. Of our own volition we have freely and lovingly mixed our ancestry with every available nationality. But the political solution for creating Americans of Hawaiians has failed to produce the desired "melting pot" effect, that is, eradicating a Native Hawaiian identity. As Bayonet instructs us, we have come to see that legal solutions usually mask expedient ways for a few *haole* to continue to control our lands and wealth.

This does not mean that there is no political solution to the control of our lands. It means that there is no political solution to the fragmentation of our identity as Native people short of reinstating the national government. But even that will hardly create a *l hui* without our continued effort to learn our history, speak our language, develop our arts, and compete with one another for political leadership, while acknowledging and glorying in what makes us different from other nations and their peoples.

'Ae. 'Oia ka *nīnau maoli* (That is the real question). Who the hell are we? If our own activism and scholarship does not continually seek the answers to that question, then it is activism and scholarship for someone else. Asking that question, by the way, does not only admit that colonial assimilation has worked considerable harm on the Hawaiian people. Trying to trace a distinct Native identity that has been strung out over a century and a half of colonial conversions of all sorts, suggests that *K naka Maoli* have been disfigured in different ways. Not all have suffered economically. Some have even prospered. Nor has impoverishment meant the same across the board. Poverty lessened the dignity of some of our people and raised it in others.

So we have changed. We make such admissions guardedly, knowing what political ammunition this provides for those, like the governor, who think we should simply act like other Americans. One wonders if he holds the Center for Hawaiian Studies responsible for the nationalist expressions of our people, but we know that if anything, the opposite is true. We Hawaiians have always held that we are unique, and in the last few years we have encouraged our scholars, elders, and even our children to show us how.

Unique. Yes. There is not another people in the world like us. But who, exactly is "Us?" The problem of the blood quantum and its political consequences resurfaces with every letter to the *Advertiser*. When one frequent *haole* contributor argued that *K naka Maoli* were "fully assim-

lated, happily intermarried,” and “indistinguishable from everyone else,”<sup>7</sup> there were angry responses, one in particular, that argued the central point of Hawaiian identity. “Hawaiians and only Hawaiians can decide who is Hawaiian and who is not Hawaiian” (Ferreira 2000, A-111). Such logic would resist the most well meaning of laws, and our experience tells us how infrequently law, for Natives, has been well meaning.

But such logic defies “cultural studies” as well, unless we understand that for *K naka Maoli*, at least, studying our own culture is no mere academic exercise. We are trying to survive. Thus, even the best-intentioned nonnative scholars can tell us little beyond how they perceive us. To have others learn our language—better than we know it—and master our arts and sciences is flattering and important. But others cannot tell us who we are. We will always mediate and often contradict their findings with what we know and what we feel. If the scientist is uncomfortable with this caveat, I will simply repeat what I have said from the beginning of this essay. Identity is no small matter for us.

To return to the *mo‘olelo*, the problem for Kalaukoa and Poepoe was not a problem of identity. Surely they knew who they were better than we know ourselves after fifty years of television and a century of American education. Surely they knew they were Hawaiian. Not one speaker on that stage would for a moment have considered himself an American. Yet their own culture had been changed by the experience of dealing with a western colonial hegemony. Their *m ‘i* had been humiliated and they had failed to protect him or the sanctity of their laws. They were suspicious of one another and bitter that the *haole* had so successfully betrayed them. Nevertheless, it would never have occurred to those men, living at the cusp of a moment when their race, nationhood, and government were one and the same, to ask the question, Who then, are we? Those of us in this century who confront this question, confounded in ways that our ancestors were not, can take nothing for granted, not even our Hawaiianess. That too, is something we might cherish.

## Notes

1 There is, however, some disagreement over the use of the word *Hawaiian* to describe the aboriginal people and their descendants, especially since the word itself is not part of the Native lexicon. Some people insist that *Hawaiian* denotes mere residence rather than ancestry, like Californian or Texan. Others insist that

whether we are called Hawaiian, *K naka Maoli*, or *‘ iwi*, we are referring to the Native people of Hawai‘i.

2 A public discussion of the importance of ancestry has been taking place in the editorial section of the *Honolulu Advertiser* since Freddy Rice first announced his intention to challenge the Office of Hawaiian Affairs elections. Artist Peter Charlot has sparked the most recent exchange, arguing that “a particular string of genetic letters does not make a Hawaiian” (*Honolulu Advertiser*, 16 June 2000, A-19).

3 My father, who is half-Hawaiian has never applied for Hawaiian home lands, in large part out of anxiety that the intense scrutiny of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands might possibly determine that my grandmother was not a full-blooded Hawaiian and thus alter his own conception of himself. His identity is worth more to him than the land.

4 See *Honolulu Advertiser*, 14 May 2000, A-14. In one of a series of letters to the editor sparked by *Rice versus Cayetano*, Mr Paul Silva wrote, “Trust benefits will likely be paid largely by those who have no Hawaiian blood for the benefit of persons who essentially have so little Hawaiian blood that they can hardly be considered indigenous.”

5 See Osorio, 1996. A revised version is under review by the University of Hawai‘i Press. Its working title is *Dismembering L hui: A History of the Dismantling of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*. Anyone who wishes to read the dissertation on which this book is based may locate it at Hamilton Library, University of Hawai‘i at M noa.

6 Kame‘eleihiwa 1992, 193–197. The petitions are located in the Hawai‘i State Archives.

7 Conklin 2000, A-9. Conklin has been writing similar letters and even short editorials for more than a year, supporting Freddy Rice’s petition and arguing against any Native entitlements whatsoever. The full text of his letter reads: “But *K naka Maoli* are not a separate and distinct people living apart from the rest of the society like real Indian tribes. They do not have a tribal government exercising government authority over them like real Indian tribes. They do not want these things. *K naka Maoli* are fully assimilated, happily intermarried, living and working side by side with everyone else. They are everyone else.”

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### *Abstract*

In the summer of 1887 a small group of conspirators representing about five hundred mostly Caucasian residents and citizens of the Hawaiian Kingdom forced King David Kalikau to sign a new constitution of their own design that explicitly humiliated him and the largely Native Hawaiian electorate. In the political rallies that followed, Natives who supported the new constitution and who exhorted Hawaiians to rally around it were ridiculed by opponents, who nevertheless were often divided over whether to boycott the coming elections or to try and take over the government through the vote and remove the most egregious clauses from the constitution. As the recent reconciliation hearings in Hawai'i have demonstrated, the tension between participating in practical politics and nurturing a defiant national spirit persists today and continues to afflict and enliven the issues of nationhood and identity.

KEYWORDS: cultural studies, decolonization, Hawaiian history, Hawaiian sovereignty, Pacific studies